

## Message Text

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73

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

/067 W

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R 211340Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 2064

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT LEBANON

AMEMBASSY CAIRO EGYPT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS SYRIA

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON UK

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN

CNO WASHINGTON DC

DOD WASHINGTON DC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMIDEASTFOR

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PGOV, PFOR, PINT, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAINI POLITICAL SCENE

REFERENCE : (A) MANAMA 270

(B) MANAMA 158

(C) MANAMA 503, JULY 14, 1974

(D) MANAMA 001, OCTOBER 5, 1974

(E) MANAMA 881, OCTOBER 26, 1974

SUMMARY: AS SECOND PARLIAMENTARY SESSION NEARS AN END,  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS COMPLETED EXTENSIVE DELIBERATIONS  
ON STATE BUDGET AND ECONOMIC POLICY WITH GOVERNMENT STILL  
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VERY MUCH IN DRIVER'S SEAT. CABINET APPEARS CONFIDENT IN

ITS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ASSEMBLY AND REASONABLY OPTIMISTIC IT CAN POSTPONE MOST POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES UNTIL NEXT SESSION. NEVERTHELESS, ECONOMIC DEBATES HAVE REVEALED BROAD SCOPE OF SOCIAL/ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BAHRAIN SOCIETY FACING. THESE PROBLEMS ARE RESULT OF RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND GOVERNMENT IS HANDLING THEM WITH REASONABLE COMPETENCE. THE "STRAINS OF SUCCESS", HOWEVER, MIGHT WELL PRODUCE SIGNIFICANT FUTURE POLITICAL PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. SECOND SESSION OF BAHRAIN'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS SCHEDULED TO END WITH THE SUMMER RECESS IN MID-JUNE. AS SUGGESTED MANAMA 158, FOR OVER TEN WEEKS GOVERNMENT HAS KEPT ASSEMBLY BUSY WITH ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, FIRST THE STATE BUDGET AND THEN AN ECONOMIC POLICY REVIEW, WHILE KEEPING HOT POLITICAL ISSUES SUCH AS LABOR LAW AND SECURITY DECREE OUT OF REACH OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE. AS REPORTED MANAMA 270, IT NOW APPEARS UNLIKELY SECURITY DECREE WILL GET OUT OF COMMITTEE IN THIS SESSION.

2. APRIL 19 I ASKED MINISTER OF STATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS WHAT CABINET EXPECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO ACCOMPLISH IN REMAINING MEETINGS OF THIS SESSION. HE REPLIED "HOPEFULLY NOTHING EXCEPT A LOT OF TALK." ON CLOSER QUESTIONING HE ACKNOWLEDGED CONTROVERSIAL LABOR LAW MIGHT GET TO ASSEMBLY FLOOR BEFORE JUNE BUT HE DOUBTS ASSEMBLY WILL BE ABLE TO VOTE ON IT BEFORE RECESSING. APPROPRIATE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE HAS BEEN STRUGGLING FOR WEEKS TRYING TO RECONCILE GOVERNMENT'S PATERNALISTIC AND CONSERVATIVE DRAFT LABOR LAW (MANAMA 939 AND 1022) WITH A DECIDEDLY PROGRESSIVE VERSION SUBMITTED BY ASSEMBLY'S "PEOPLES' BLOC".

3. MINISTER OF STATE'S APRIL 19 COMMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS BY VARIOUS OTHER MINISTERS OVER LAST MONTH INDICATE CONSIDERABLE CABINET CONFIDENCE THAT GOVERNMENT HAS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REASONABLY IN HAND AND ABLE TO KEEP CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL ISSUES ON ICE. GOVERNMENT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY ADEPT, IF NOT EXACTLY COMFORTABLE, IN DEALING WITH BOTH LEFT-WING OPPOSITION PEOPLES' BLOC AND CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS MEMBERS OF ASSEMBLY. AS NOTED MANAMA 158, HOWEVER, THE MODERATE ELEMENT IN THE ASSEMBLY (50 PERCENT OF THE ELECTED MEMBERS) INCREASINGLY DISPLAYS "WHIG" RATHER THAN "TORY" TENDENCIES AND MINISTERS

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MUST WORK HARD TO WIN ASSEMBLY SUPPORT ON EACH ISSUE. MINISTER OF STATE SUMMED SITUATION UP APRIL 19, WITH IN MY OPINION EXCESSIVE MODESTY, BY SAYING "WE ARE DOING ABOUT AS WELL AS ANY OTHER MINORITY GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD."

4. MANAMA 503 AND SUBSEQUENT REPORTING HAVE INDICATED THAT WHILE GOB APPEARS CAPABLE OF HANDLING CRITICAL POLITICAL ISSUES AS THEY ARISE, RAPID PACE OF DEVELOPMENT IN BAHRAIN IS

AGGRAVATING CERTAIN BASIC ECONOMIC/SOCIAL PROBLEMS WHICH  
CONTAIN THE SEEDS OF POTENTIAL FUTURE POLITICAL INSTABILITY.  
GOVZRNMENT HAS BEEN RESPONDING TO PRESSURE TO INTERVENE MORE  
ACTIVELY IN THESE PROBLEMS AND, AS WE NOTED MANAMA 801, BY  
INTERVENING INEVITABLY PLACES ITSELF IN A POSITION OF MAKING  
ALMOST EVERYBODY UNHAPPY ALMOST ALL THE TIME. ECONOMIC POLICY  
DEBATE DURING LAST TWO SESSIONS OF ASSEMBLY WAS REVEALING  
INDICATION OF BREADTH AND INTENSITY OF PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT  
THESE PROBLEMS -- INADEQUATE HOUSING, INFLATION, GAPS IN  
SOCIAL SERVICES, UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH, AND THE  
INCREASING IMPACT OF FOREIGNERS, INCLUDING FOREIGN WORKERS,  
ON BAHRAIN'S ECONOMY AND SOCIETY.

5. THESE PROBLEMS ARE LARGELY "PROBLEMS OF SUCCESS", THE  
RESULT OF THE ACCELERATING DEVELOPMENT MOST BAHRAINIS LONG  
FOR. YET AS THE STRAINS INCREASE, THESE ISSUES APPEAR TO BE  
GENERATING A CLASSIC "GROWTH/NO GROWTH" DEBATE IN BAHRAIN'S  
BODY POLITIC. APRIL 19 I ASKED DEVELOPMENT MINISTER SHIRAWI,  
WHO HAS BORNE BRUNT OF MOST OF THE ATTACKS ON GOVERNMENT  
POLICY DURING BOTH BUDGET AND ECONOMIC POLICY DEBATES, HOW HE  
THOUGHT GOB HAD COME OUT. SHIRAWI INDICATED SOMEWHAT  
TENTATIVELY HIS SATISFACTION THAT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO COPE  
WITH VARIOUS PROBLEMS HAD RECEIVED GRUDGING SUPPORT OF  
MAJORITY OF ELECTED DEPUTIES IN FACE OF "CLASSIC ARGUMENTS"  
AGAINST WAY GOB IS HANDLING THINGS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER,  
THAT CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC/SOCIAL POLICIES HAD BEEN  
VOICED ACROSS THE IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM OF ASSEMBLY'S MEMBERSHIP,  
AFTER DULY NOTING THAT BOTH LEFTISTS AND RIGHTISTS HAD  
IDEOLOGICAL BONES TO PICK AND SOME MODERATES WERE NOT ABOVE  
CURRYING FAVOR WITH THEIR CONSTITUENTS BY FLAMING RHETORIC,  
SHIRAWI ADMITTED BAHRAIN IS FACING SOME TOUGH GROWING PAINS  
WITH REAL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE, PARTICULARLY SEVERAL YEARS  
DOWN THE PIKE.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** GOVERNMENT BUDGET, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, ECONOMIC PROGRAMS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 21 APR 1975  
**Decapton Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decapton Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GarlanWA  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Reference:** 75 MANAMA 270  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
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**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
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**Subject:** : BAHRAINI POLITICAL SCENE  
**TAGS:** PGOV, PFOR, PINT, BA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006